

Getting Your Songs Out There

Tips on Exposing Your Original Songs



By Louisa Branscomb

Often songwriters feel that they have few venues to expose their original work in the gap between the isolation of writing the song and the "long shot" of having that song recorded by a touring artist. However, exposing and gaining feedback on your songs is essential—that's how you learn how well that song communicates its message, and whether it reaches the hearts of others. Further, it is a good way to increase your skills as the singer of your songs along with your instrumental skills, and to get feedback about where you are with your craft.

Even if you do not feel you are a good singer, remember there are more than a few well-known songwriters out there who were not considered "good singers," until their songs became well-known, and their style of singing them became part of the magic! But many family rooms were filled with song, and many stages were crossed with only a few listeners out there in the dark before that happened!

Here are some tips for creative ways to get your original material to new ears:

1. Explore venues such as cafés, lounges and listening rooms in your area to see if they would allow you to put together an evening of songwriters from your area.
2. Work with your local bluegrass association to create venues for exposure of your work and other songwriters in your area. Offer to do a warm-up set for shows they might be doing, along with several other songwriters.
3. Come to World of Bluegrass and attend the events open to all writers, including workshops and the Song Circles. If you have ideas for songwriter events, submit them to Mark Brinkman, Chair of the IBMA Songwriter Committee, at brinksongs@insight.rr.com [1] or to staff liaison Nancy Cardwell at nancyc@ibma.org [2].
4. Send a composition to the IBMA Songwriter Showcase, which selects songs for presentation at IBMA each year. (The 2012 deadline has passed, but there's next year! And you can attend and get an idea of the kinds of songs selected by attending this event.)
5. Plan a trip Nashville to explore other songwriter rounds! There are regular songwriter

nights at the Commodore Hotel, Hotel Indigo, Willhagan's Bar and Maddonna, among others. These venues have different formats and are usually headed up by a songwriter who volunteers their time to coordinate the songwriter rounds. Note: Check online to see whether an event is occurring, as venues not infrequently change their schedules and events.

6. Work with acquaintances who might be willing to host a house concert for you. House concerts are an excellent way to present original material to an interested audience! This approach can range all the way from offering to play at a private party you may be attending to finding someone willing to host a house concert for a minimum donation and help you promote your show.
7. Volunteer to help with IBMA songwriter events. (Contact Mark Brinkman at brinksongs@insight.rr.com ^[1] or Nancy Cardwell at nancyc@ibma.org ^[2].)
8. Participate in The Bluebird Café's regular audition process to be a part of their songwriter rounds (see details on the Bluebird website).
9. Find an experienced songwriter to give you professional feedback on your song, or mentor you as a songwriter, which some writers informally as colleagues, or for a fee for more formalized artist development. Networking at IBMA is a wonderful way to find such a writer. IBMA also offers a Songwriter Mentor service to member writers, which pairs new writers up with an experienced songwriter for feedback and advice on one song. Contact the IBMA office for info on this program managed by Tony Rackley.

Last but not least, *keep writing!* There are no bad songs, just songs that reach their mark and those that teach us how to aim.

Louisa Branscomb is an award-winning songwriter, co-founder and past chair of the Songwriter Committee, and chair of IBMA's Bluebird in the Bluegrass Sub-Committee.

Tags:

[Bluebird in the Bluegrass](#) ^[3]

[Louisa Branscomb](#) ^[4]

Source URL: <http://ibma.org/node/390>

Links:

[1] <mailto:brinksongs@insight.rr.com>

[2] <mailto:nancyc@ibma.org>

[3] <http://ibma.org/taxonomy/term/528>

[4] <http://ibma.org/taxonomy/term/55>